

In our Gospel today, in this season of Easter, we bear witness to the very last words that Jesus shared with his disciples. Matthew 28, often described as the great commission, saw Jesus call together the disciples for one last talk – one last discussion. And, he set them a challenging task – he called them to follow his example – he called them to follow in his footsteps. Jesus calls the disciples “to go and make disciples of all nations” – he calls them to “baptise in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit”.

In other words, the disciples are called to share with others the teachings and the fellowship and the guidance and the grace that they had themselves received. And, this great calling – this commission is repeated in all the Gospels, in one form or another. At the end of Mark’s Gospel (Mk 16), Jesus gathers the disciples together and he tells them to “go out into the world and preach the Gospel to all of creation” – to baptise the faithful and spread the good news. At the end of Luke’s Gospel (Lk 24), Jesus calls the disciples to tell his story – to share a message of repentance and forgiveness with all the nations of the world. And, at the end of John’s Gospel (Jn 21), Jesus turns to Peter and asks his “Do you love me”? Peter replies “Yes Lord, Yes. You know that I love you”. Jesus then says to him “feed my sheep” and “tend my lambs”.

And, in a broader sense, this Gospel message calls us to do the same today.

In the week, I found myself thinking about this great commission – this calling that is both yours and mine. And it occurred to me that this calling can seem to be a bit daunting. How daunting is it for us – as comfortable middle of the road Anglicans - to share our faith with others and invite them to come and experience the blessings that we share here at Bayswater? To share our faith and feed God’s lambs? Yes, I suspect for some, this will sound quite daunting.

Well, fortunately, I don’t think it’s quite as difficult as we often made it out to be. Our calling today is to step out in faith and share our hunger for God with others. And, it’s very important that I make this point before we go any further – God’s great commission is intended for those who are experience spiritual hunger. In our hunger for God and the things of God, some of us are never really satisfied – the closer we are to God the closer we want to be. And, our ministry is simply an extension of that hunger. We search to God and others who are also searching for God.

Are we truly hungry?

In a sense, as humans created in the image and likeness of God, I think we have a natural longing for the spiritual world – a hunger for meaning and purpose and a deep desire for strong connections.

So, in a sense, all we need to do today is identify the hunger that lives within us – our hunger for God. In the end, we can’t tap into the spiritual hunger of others if we aren’t hungry ourselves. In order to prepare ourselves for our work – God’s great commission – we must attend to our own hunger.

**1. Hunger is a gift.** I regularly thank God for the gift of hunger in my life. And, in my prayers I often pray for spiritual hunger.

When we sense a burning longing in our hearts, a tugging at our souls to pull away from the things of the world and be with God – when we want to rest in the presence of God - to know God better and to read the Bible – when we ask questions about our spiritual journey, when we search for people who know God... it's not a random emotion or a passing phase. **This is the drawing of the Holy Spirit.** (Luke 24:32) Just as the Holy Spirit works through us in our ministry – the same Holy Spirit will provide for our needs along the way.

Like servicing the car or eating a balanced diet (eating our vegetables), we are called to feed ourselves – we attend to our spiritual hunger, which provides fuel for the journey – it keeps us spiritually strong. We need God and the things of God to support us in our ministry. This brings me to my second point.

**2. Hunger must be acted upon or it will fade.** (In the words of the Song of Solomon 2) Your desire for God is the work of the Holy Spirit drawing you closer to heaven's table, to deeper relationship with God. (According to Isaiah 55) **It's an invitation** to feast on the things that truly satisfy the heart. Put simply, our loving God is always working to stir up within us a hunger – we become profoundly aware of our need. **We must, however, respond to that invitation. If there is no action on our part in response to that hunger, it usually fades.** It's a simple spiritual law: If you feed the hunger, it will grow. If you ignore the hunger, it will fade. Once again, like the car that isn't serviced regularly or the person who eats poorly, our ability to live out this great commission will be largely dependent on our spiritual health and strength and the things we do to maintain them. The more we feed, the stronger we become. This leads to my last point...

**3. Hunger begets hunger.** As a father and a husband, I have discovered that my connections with my family grow stronger and stronger when I share my life with them. And, the same hold true for the church, the more time we share together in study, prayer and worship, the stronger our connections will grow, which then leads to even stronger connections and a growing hunger. The same is true with spiritual hunger. (Psalm 34:8) **The more you get, the more you will continue to have. The more you taste, the more you want. It's a cycle of spiritual life and growth.**

**The opposite is true as well.** The less spiritually hungry we are, the less we will desire of God, the less we will be filled. That is a cycle, not of spiritual growth, but of spiritual apathy.

Today, I pray that our hunger for God will grow in this place – our appetite for God. I pray that our awareness of the Holy Spirit will inspire us and challenge us – ever increasing – ever growing. I pray that we will be consumed with spiritual hunger. That we will seize the moment, come to God and be filled. Again and again and again.

**“Blessed are those who HUNGER and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.”**  
**Matthew 5:6**

We are on this journey together. May our hearts be filled with gladness, moving us to share what we value – a great commission that truly reflects our deepest desires and our spiritual longing.